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WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#). Mideast
- [2](#). Syrian-Lebanese Track
- [3](#). Pope John Paul II

Key stories in the media:

All media on Sunday and Monday (3, 4 April) led with stories on the Pope's death and disengagement-related reports.

Ha'aretz reported Sunday that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon decided he will not request funding for the disengagement plan during his upcoming visit to the United States. Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, who visited Washington last week, told his hosts that there was a great discrepancy between Abbas' declarations and deeds. The focus of Mofaz' visit to Washington was the dispute over Israel's arms sales to China.

On Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) announced he was relieving West Bank security chief, General Haj Ismail Jaber, of his command of more than 15,000 Palestinian police. In another move yesterday, that suggests he might be preparing to clean house, Abbas issued a statement of his intention to begin implementing a month-old law that would force security personnel to retire at 60. In another move toward unifying the forces, Abbas ordered the relocation of all the police apparatus to Jericho.

Ha'aretz headlined Israel has decided to establish a dumpster for the Sharon area in the West Bank (near Nablus). The paper noted that Israel intends to dump 10,000 tons of garbage a month, a thing that could jeopardize Palestinian water sources.

Leading media reported on Syrian President Bashar el-Assad's announcement to UN Special Envoy to the Middle East, Terje Larsen, saying that Syria will withdraw all of its forces from Lebanon by the end of April.

Ha'aretz reported (3 April) that March 2005 was the calmest month in Israel and the territories ever since the Intifadah started in September 2000. No Israeli was killed by Palestinian fire and only one Palestinian (an Islamic Jihad activist) was killed. IDF logs carried only one warning of an intended suicide bombing, but a rise was noted in "popular" activities such as stone and Molotov cocktail throwing. A 40% decline in detentions in the territories was also noted.

Maariv related on Sunday that on 30 March, Labor Ministers Shimon Peres and Haim Ramon held secret meetings with PA Ministers Muhammad Dahlan and Said Arikat in an attempt to coordinate disengagement and antiterror moves. The Palestinians complained that Israelis are imposing difficulties and torpedoing attempts to promote ties and introduce alleviations for the Palestinians. The Israelis complained that the PA reforms are stuck, Palestinians uninterested in coordinating the disengagement, and that anarchy prevails there.

Ha'aretz revealed on Sunday that Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met privately with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon at the premier's Sycamore Ranch in the Negev on 1 April and agreed to ease the tension between them "for the sake of the unity of the Likud." From a

political standpoint, Likud sources said, it is impossible to overstate the importance of the meeting. Speaking at the Haifa Technion on 1 April, Netanyahu said that he is fully obligated to helping implement the disengagement plan that was approved by the government, despite his reservations.

In disengagement related stories, the Jerusalem Post reported that 20 Yeshivat Hakotel students, two rabbis, and their families are currently moving to the Gush Katif settlement. The Gush Katif settlements of Atzmona, Gadid, B'dolach, Neveh Dekalim and Morag have absorbed more than 100 families in recent months. Hundreds more visit the Gush Katif area every day to show their support.

Maariv reports that rabbis identified with the extreme right have been drafting a list of rabbis who will arrive at the Katif Bloc after Passover to join the settlers' struggle against the evacuation. The rabbis will sign a petition in which they vow to "gladly go to prison without violence to prevent the deportation of Jews and the destruction of the Holy Land."

Yediot Aharonot said that the Israel Police have recently decided to tighten security on Temple Mount for fear of attempts by extremist Jews to attack the Muslim holy place. The police are currently monitoring some 500 hard-core right-wing activists. There is also fear that extremists might attack evacuating forces to stop the Gaza Strip evacuation.

Maariv reported that the Disengagement Administration head reported yesterday that, though few filed for compensation so far, some 250 families have already completed the forms and handed them over to their representing attorneys. He estimated that eventually some 70 percent will reach an arrangement and will not be evacuated by force. Maariv added that a special reserve army unit was secretly established last week by the Defense Ministry for one of the most sensitive of missions-evacuation of the Katif Bloc cemetery.

Most media reported that the first three of eighteen AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopters (described by the media as the best attack helicopter in the world) have landed in Israel on Sunday. These three helicopters are part of a \$650 million military aid package from the U.S. to Israel.

Yediot Aharonot has learned that the Israeli National Security Council [NSC] has recently drafted a plan for the preservation of the Israel's demography. Believing that by 2020 the Arab minority will be 40% of the Israeli population as nearly 200,000 non-Jewish families received citizenship and another 100,000 Palestinians are illegally in Israel, the NSC suggested that persons applying for Israeli citizenship will have to prove linkage with Israel, pledge allegiance, and show they are able to support themselves financially. A minimal age will also be set, persons who are in Israel illegally will have to leave to apply, and applications will be individual, not for extended families.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Israel's interest is for Abu Mazen to succeed in his efforts to expand the current security lull and spur the resumption of negotiations on a comprehensive treaty. This interest obligates Israel to do more to help him and other moderates in the Palestinian leadership."

Former head of IDF Intelligence, columnist Shlomo Gazit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "A secret and discrete mission by Dov Weisglass should be to the Muqata in Ramallah, a mission in which he clarifies what are Abu Mazen's needs and expectations ... and how we can assist him during the battle he is handling. The trip to Washington comes to prepare the background for the next Intifadah; the trip to the Muqata could maybe prevent it from happening."

Block Quotes:

I. "Strengthen Abu Mazen"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (April 4): "It is clear that in the long run, Abu Mazen cannot

accept the existence of multiple armed organizations in the PA. But so far, he has not succeeding in reforming the security services, as both the road map and the United States require him to do.... Israel's interest is for Abu Mazen to succeed in his efforts to expand the current security lull and spur the resumption of negotiations on a comprehensive treaty. This interest obligates Israel to do more to help him and other moderates in the Palestinian leadership. Israel cannot make do with assuming the role of an outside observer. It must, to the best of its ability, contribute to the process that Abu Mazen is having difficulty in carrying out, even if such assistance will often entail security risks.... All of the above steps relate to the near term, and their goal is to help Abu Mazen improve his standing among the Palestinian public. But over the longer term, they are insufficient. Israel must start preparing now for the next stages of its relationship with the Palestinians. One important step would be to start genuinely implementing the road map. In order for the diplomatic process to progress and develop, Israel must start dealing now with the steps that will follow the disengagement."

II. " A gesture to Advance Calmness"

Former head of IDF Intelligence, columnist Shlomo Gazit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (April 4): "The new [Palestinian] president has succeeded to force a cease-fire on Palestinian organizations and ever since there is almost a complete calm. Indeed he did it his way. He did not declare war over the organizations, and he did not confront them.... but as of now the result stands the test of time.... Israel must free itself from a set of values and delusions that stand to chance and have no basis. We should view Abu Mazen and the PA a partner for negotiations. A secret and discrete mission by Dov Weisglass should be to the Muqata in Ramallah, a mission in which he clarifies what are Abu Mazen's needs and expectations ... and how we can assist him during the battle he is handling. The trip to Washington comes to prepare the background for the next Intifadah; the trip to the Muqata could maybe prevent it from happening."

12. Syrian-Lebanese Track:

Summary:

Arab Affairs commentator Smadar Peri writes in Yediot Aharonot: "When the last Syrian soldier leaves Lebanon, Israel will lose the Syrian 'address,' despite the fact that Beirut will keep receiving instructions from Damascus and Tehran, only in subtler ways.... Saddam's end is Asad's nightmare, but Syria will not let go of its backyard."

Block Quotes:

"False Disengagement"

Arab Affairs commentator Smadar Peri writes in Yediot Aharonot (April 4): "Only keen observers noticed the secret visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Harazi

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to Damascus and Beirut two days ago. Ahead of the visit there by UN envoy Terje Larsen, Harazi slipped into the Syrian president's bureau to make sure that when the 'big brother' moves out of Lebanon, Iranian strongholds there -- Hizballah and the Revolutionary Guards -- are not harmed. Harazi succeeded. Yesterday, no one mentioned Iranian presence in Lebanese Biga Valley training camps or the arms shipments from Tehran to the Lebanon, via Damascus.... Moving out of Lebanon, Syrian President Asad is leaving behind many power elements to make sure that Lebanon remains a Syria protg: not only Hizballah and the Revolutionary Guards, but also hundreds of senior officials and decisionmakers in Beirut were appointed by the Syrian Presidential Palace.... So far, Israel held Syria responsible for Hizballah activities, ... but when the last Syrian soldier leaves Lebanon, Israel will lose the Syrian 'address,' despite the fact that Beirut will keep receiving instructions from Damascus and Tehran, only in subtler ways.... Saddam's end is Asad's nightmare, but Syria will not let go of its backyard."

13. Pope John Paul II:

Summary:

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized:
"Pope John Paul II was a great man and a friend of the Jewish people.... We hope that the next pope will honor his legacy by continuing in his footsteps and showing even greater moral leadership with respect to Israel and bringing Jewish-Christian relations further into a new era."

Block Quotes:

"Pope John Paul II"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (April 4): "The pope who called Jews his 'elder brothers,' who placed a message of atonement in the Western Wall, and who opened relations with the Jewish state, will be remembered with affection and admiration by the Jewish people. It was hard to fail to be touched by the compassion and dignity of this man who, though he represented one religion, came to symbolize the religious spirit to people of many faiths. It was, if anything, a measure of the respect Jews had for him that, despite his many efforts to extend a hand in friendship, it was also difficult not to be disappointed that his moral leadership did not extend further in our time of need. We would not have expected as much from a lesser pope.... In just these few words, the pope affirmed the Jews' status as the chosen people, asked for forgiveness, and pledged Christian brotherhood with Jews -- all wrapped not just in a dry statement, but in a profound and personal gesture.... Pope John Paul II was a great man and a friend of the Jewish people.... We hope that the next pope will honor his legacy by continuing in his footsteps and showing even greater moral leadership with respect to Israel and bringing Jewish-Christian relations further into a new era."

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